

# Women In Network Marketing And why do they still earn less than men?

By Rene Yarnell

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Rene Yarnell  
george@georgecollins.com

Success Team Builders <http://greatestnetworker.com/is/collins>

What is the difference between men and women? This question has confounded philosophers from the beginning of time. But it would be valuable to explore this issue from the perspective of today's business world. What's the difference between men and women in Network Marketing and how can we as women use our attributes to rise to our full potential?

## A Historical Perspective

First, let's examine the past 400 years of men and women working to support the family. Going back to the 1600s and early 1700s, business was primarily made up of farmers, artisans, and small shopkeepers who worked at home or near home with the women working closely with them.

Business was about a unified family economy centered in the home.

By the industrial period through most of the 1800s, factories began to produce goods for the marketplace that previously had been made only for personal consumption. As families began purchasing some of the labor-saving machinery, women and children went to work outside the home and became an important source of wage labor in the factories, while the men stayed home and tended to the regular farm chores.

By about 1890, all of that changed as opportunities began to present themselves for men to earn more money off the farm. For the first time, men were leaving the home to go out and become the bread-winners, while women stayed home and nurtured the family.

During these last 100 years, a man's worth was measured by being a "good provider," while a woman's was tied to making a "good marriage." Being a good husband or father or having strong spiritual values had little

or no bearing on the male image. Those kinds of values were left up to the woman, who began to lose contact with politics, law and the economy, as her energy was focused on raising the family. Women became dependent on men's wages and lost their marketable skills and psychological benefits that come from publicly recognized work.

By the early 1940s, women were going back into the work place to help out during World War II; by 1970, 40 percent of all working-age women had jobs outside the home. By the '80s, that had nearly doubled.

During the 1980s, it was the norm to have a family with both the husband and wife holding down jobs outside the home. Even though they could now afford to have more luxuries, this complete separation of the spheres of the economy and the family placed considerable tension on the family unit.

Today, in the 90s, we seem to be entering yet a new era.

This new era bears many similarities to pre-industrial times — almost as if we have come full circle. All the evidence suggests that a shift in values is taking place as both the younger and older of the baby boom generation are much more caught up in family life.

For the first time in 50 years, the entrance of women into the workplace has peaked and is now dropping. Many are leaving to go begin their own businesses where they don't have to fight against unfair odds to rise to the top.

Women represent more than one third of all small business owners. Last year alone, nearly a half a million women began their own businesses. By the year 2000, experts predict that 40 to 50 percent of all businesses will operate from the home.

More and more men, facing burnout, layoffs, and down-sizing, crumbling pension programs and disillusionment with Social Security, are moving into, or joining their wives in, home-based businesses.

As men's and women's lives are once again merging back on the home front and they're seeking a more unified family economy centered in the home, the timing has never been better for the Network Marketing Sales industry.

Given their different backgrounds, do men and women approach this business differently? More importantly, should they?

Of course we approach business differently — and I propose that we should.

Given our different orientations over the past century and our own intrinsic differences, both sexes have something extremely valuable to bring to Network Marketing. Each has something to learn from the other.

With few exceptions — like those men who may be entering this new era following an unsolicited

layoff —

men are feeling very self-confident about themselves and what they have to contribute.

Women, on the other hand, are feeling a bit downtrodden — still stereotyped by the years they were out of touch, financially dependent on their husbands, and perhaps overlooked for promotion in the workplace.

I'm writing this article not as a feminist, but woman to woman, challenging you to join me in a renewed awareness of our own self-worth, so that we can carry our weight and contribute our share to the balance of the world around us. We have much to offer our industry, our companies, our husbands and male partners, and certainly the members of our Networking organizations.

The problem has been a lack of realization of just how much we have to give and how needed our feminine qualities are in today's world.

Clearly, there are men who have a hard time coping with this evolution of women's role in our society.

Given our history, that's understandable. Men are comfortable with women doing the shopping, the cooking, community service, cleaning up and scrubbing down the house, changing the diapers, chauffeuring and taking care of the kids. As one man put it so well: "I can handle almost anything except having my wife working."

Women have always worked hard, but our role is on the threshold of significant change and along with it, so is our image. Together, if we shake off any residue of negative self-image baggage we've been carrying around with us — and begin with renewed determination to take pride in ourselves and our womanhood with our heads held high and our confidence blooming — we will see a difference immediately in our general acceptance, our leadership success, and our income.

What leadership qualities do women innately possess — and how do they differ from the styles of most men?

According to John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene in their book *Megatrends For Women*, men's leadership style is generally characterized by a more traditional command-and-control mode:

Pay attention...I've got the answers...Stay in rank...Manage from the top...Follow orders...  
Do what I say...Keep people on their toes...Here's the bottom line...Power...Rigid rules... Discipline.  
Female leadership, on the other hand, is characterized more by transforming people:

Encourage participation...Open to change...Empower others...What are your ideas?...  
Be a role model...Creativity...How can I serve you?...Share a vision...Being flexible...  
Facilitate and educate...Nourishing your environment...Manage from the center...Networking.  
Let's be clear about one thing, though — the care-and-share female style is not merely about "being nice,"  
as opposed to a masculine control approach of "being tough."

For example, sometimes the best way to empower someone may be to express anger or set rules. Supporting people is not synonymous with being "nice." That approach alone won't cut it in the business world.

Clearly, we are in transition with regard to leadership styles. The command-and-control approach is

on the downswing, while the transformation and empowerment approach is on the upswing. It's the belief of Naisbitt and Aburdene that men who are still operating in the command-and-control mode will find it more difficult to succeed in today's business world.

If you share the belief that this changing leadership style is more acceptable and effective, then the point is this: Women, who instinctively lead in this manner anyway, will find it easier over the coming decade to move into a leadership position.

So why do the vast majority of women still earn less than men even in this industry?

Women's time has come. The world has never been more ready for more women to become leaders in all career phases; politics, religion, and business. The world is ready for them.

Direct Sales was responsible for over \$14 billion of annual retail sales, of which Network Distribution was responsible for over \$11 billion in 1992, sold by over five million independent sales reps. Ninety percent of all new participants in our industry last year were women. Yet, in companies with both male and female marketers, I have heard figures as high as 90 percent of all income was earned by men.

Why?

For years women have seen themselves as victims. It is corporate America that is dishing out the unfairness to women. Women don't receive equal pay for equal performance. They are not promoted as readily as men. There is always someone to blame for women's lack of equality.

But, ladies, what is our excuse in Network Marketing?

A 1991 Catalyst poll of Fortune 1000 CEOs found that 81 percent of them believed "stereotyping and preconceptions" by men were major blocks to women reaching top levels of management. And there is still some carry-over of this into our industry.

Let's face it. A powerful male exec may be introduced to this business by a woman, but most will need the reinforcement of a strong successful male already in the business to close the deal.

So, okay, we accept the fact that men still have preconceived ideas about us. But, that alone doesn't justify our failure to rise to our own potential. Who or what is really holding us back?

We have met the enemy and it is us.

We are holding us back.

So what are we going to do about it? How can women overcome the preconceptions — both from ourselves and from men — that hold us back in the Networking business world?

To answer that question, let me offer four success principles for women in business.

## 1. Strengthen your self-confidence.

We women are lacking in belief in ourselves. We don't have all the self-confidence that it takes to be regarded as a leader. We must continue to work on and project our personal power, remembering that attitude is more important than ability.

If anyone can do it, we can, too!

Do everything within your ability to work on strengthening your own belief in yourself. Read books, listen to tapes, attend a Tony Robbins seminar. Not a day goes by that you can't wake up saying to yourself,

"I am making a difference in my world! I have even more to give today than yesterday!"

Think with conviction and then speak with conviction.

## 2. Emulate the person you are addressing.

Get your head inside the head of the other person. If you are prospecting a man — think like a man.

Most men will not be turned on by great skin care or even your effective vitamins. They will by big money and free time potential, and the lifestyle that goes with it. Then they'll need to know that this business is based on solid product. Lead with the opportunity and close with the product — not the other way around.

## 3. Lead like a successful woman, not like a take-off of a successful man.

The new leadership qualities that are emerging today come naturally to women. It is men who may find that they have more adjustments to make in the coming years.

Don't be afraid to be who you are and let your own innate leadership style emerge. If you are a caring, nurturing person, be that. Remember: No leaders ever rose to the top in Network Marketing without bringing a lot of other people with them.

Women have that innate ability to make others feel very responsible — and yet very supported. Those women who attempt to become leaders often fall into the trap of role-modeling themselves after the male leadership style, trying to conform to their standards. And the sad part is that really aggressive women are not terribly appreciated in the workplace.

We're in transition, so this may take some time, but most men will admit that they admire and will pay attention to a woman in business who is logical, business-like, not too pushy, and yet still very much a woman.

## 4. Create big-picture thinking (if your goal is to reach one of the top levels in your company.)

Women outnumber men in successful retailing. But it is impossible to reach the back end of any compensation plan in Network Distribution on your own retailing efforts alone. You must leverage yourself and begin finding other marketers who will use and share the product, and leverage themselves for the full power of the pay plan to work for you.

Think big. The majority of women sold most of the \$11 billion of goods through Networking last year, and yet they made a pittance of the total commissions paid out.

Why?

Because women are still more comfortable seeing themselves as retailers than as head of an organization of retailers and recruiters. They still prefer 30 – 50 percent of their own personal effort to 2 – 5 percent of everyone else's.

Do we have different values?

You bet we do! As the new paradigm of leadership takes hold, women are in a position like never before to influence politics, religion, and business. We will see a woman president of the United States in our lifetime. We will see women priests in the Catholic Church — not a female Pope, mind you, but definitely women priests.

We will see many more women at the head of Fortune 500 companies managing with the new leadership style I've described. And we will see more women rising to the top of Network Marketing companies, achieving the highest pay level possible.

All of this will change the face of the world as we know it. Politics, religion, and business will look and feel differently than they do today.

Why?

Because women's values will be woven into the system traditionally dominated by males. And we're already seeing it happen.

Let's examine three areas in our industry where we are seeing the female influence: balance, nurturing, and integrity.

**Balance** Without the female influence, given our history of the last 100 years, most men would be pushing money, money, money as the reason to get involved in Network Marketing.

With the female influence, we balance it. We talk about having enough money to do the things we really value, enough time to enjoy it with the people we love, and enough security to go into the future without worry.

Women have come a long way at developing balance. Men are newcomers to this idea. As Naisbitt and Aburdene point out, in 1964 men didn't sit around and say,

"Well, we've done pretty well at work, in business, on the golf course and on the battlefield. But we're not well-rounded human beings. We haven't done as well at parenting, we don't really get too deeply into relationships and it would probably do us good to learn to be more caring and spiritual."

But somewhere over the past couple of decades, women did begin saying this:

"We are good mothers, wives and friends. We're pretty good at supporting and caring for people. We are sharp dressers and pretty good cooks. But there has to be more to life than this. We want to make something of ourselves and make a contribution to the world around us." Today, nearly 30 years later, women as a whole have achieved more balance in their lives and bring this as a gift to our industry.

Nurturing Without the female influence, there is a certain dog-eat-dog competitiveness that would pervade our industry. With the female influence, there is a nurturing, supportive quality that comes through and can't be mistaken.

Beyond all of us making money is the personal growth, free time, support, bonding, friendship. There is no other business in the world where your success is generated the more you help others succeed. This aspect of our business — really showing our love for others — is ideally suited for women and is their second gift to the field of Network Marketing.

Integrity Without the female influence, integrity could be reduced to the philosophy that “anything goes in business.” It would be about conquering and winning, often at the expense of others.

“I wouldn't think of cutting you out as my friend, but this is business.”

With the female influence, integrity is defined in terms of fairness to everyone, equal opportunity for all, helping others succeed. It's about everyone winning.

Women have already experienced unfairness in the workplace for the past 50 years in corporate America.

Do you think they are going to sit back and let that happen all over again in their new chosen field of endeavor?

Not a chance.

Most men would hip-hip-hooray Vince Lombardi who said: “Winning isn't everything. It is the only thing.”

Most women would hold in highest esteem Cathy O'Brien, the woman marathon runner, when she did something few men could understand:

Remember the 1992 Olympic Marathon trials? Two women's lives came together here that would change their fate forever.

The runners were off. Both had been pacing themselves perfectly. Then there was a jam-up at the water table at the 15 mile mark. One minute Janis Klecker was leading the pack, the next she was crashing to the concrete, flipped over on her back, forcing Cathy O'Brien to leap over her. O'Brien came back to help her up — and Klecker went on to win the race.

Yes. Cathy O'Brien lost the race — but she won in the hearts of everyone looking on.

That kind of behavior is the stuff Network Marketing is made of — people winning by helping other people win. Women are naturals at this. They have done wonders to help raise the level of integrity in our industry.

So, given all these differences, how can we extract the best of both worlds — couples doing the business together?

In a book called *The Chalice and the Blade*, Riane Eisler talks about a partnership society where collaborative couples move away from total separation in the workplace to pooling their creative talents into a satisfying new enterprise.

For example, my husband Mark and I have seriously contemplated running for public

office together, pooling our respective talents — not as Governor and “first lady,” but together in a shared capacity.

The idea is still way ahead of its time, but the coupled team approach has merit.

In our business, it can work. My husband is without a doubt a master recruiter and motivator. But I am the better teacher. Mark is the big picture person — the visionary. I’m the one who pays more attention to detail — to follow-through.

Other women give balance to the partnership by nurturing, organizational skills, being good listeners, drawing others out, and giving a balanced perspective to the very essence of showing people what this business is really all about.

Money is great but what is money without time freedom?

Having time is great but what is that without your health?

And all of that is great, but what is any of it without the nurturing of love and friendship?

It is my belief that men and women can bring all of this in perspective better together than individually.

So, what about single women?

Before marrying Mark, I built my organization as a single woman for four years while serving in an elected public office. I am convinced that single women have never been better positioned to succeed at this business than now.

In addition to making the changes we have already discussed, add just one more step: Team up with a male counterpart — an upline, downline, or sideline — who can help project the necessary balance to those men who still stereotype us. This needn’t be a formal partnership, but rather an informal team approach to the business. Given our history, it is understandable that it will take time before most men shake their preconceived ideas about us and our role.

To lead in the new paradigm, women must understand how the new approach looks to those still locked in the old. “Gushing with enthusiasm” can come off as shallow and naive. Asking for opinions, a woman can come off looking like she doesn’t know what she is doing. And if you empower others, you may appear powerless to those who still think in the old mode. But remember: in the team approach, you have something to give, not just something to receive.

To lead in the new paradigm, women must understand how the new approach looks to those still locked in the old.

Whatever your contribution to the partnership is — nurturing, organizational skills, attention to details, listening, teaching, drawing others out — recognize it and be proud of what you bring.

So there is a difference between the sexes — and thank God for it! To point out that we need each other is to say the obvious. We have a contribution to make, each in our own way.

I believe the secret to women’s success in the field of Network Marketing is to renew our awareness of our own self-worth. We have much to offer our industry, our companies, our husbands and male associates, and all the members of our organization. Our feminine qualities are very much needed in today’s world.

Shake off those feelings of low self-esteem; begin to take pride in yourself and your womanhood. This one giant step can, in and of itself, lead you to see an immediate difference in how others accept you, how others follow your lead, and how successful you become.

We are in an industry perfectly suited for us that can and is transforming people's lives for the better.

We are in an industry that is helping put priorities back in order — with family values and home focus.

We are in an industry that encourages and promotes close friendships.

We are in an industry where people with like values can more easily meet and find each other.

We are in an industry where loving and nurturing others can lead to the ultimate success.

Let me share with you a story out of my past. I was a Roman Catholic nun in the '60s, in St. Louis. As part of my mission, I used to visit an old folks home nearby, where I got to know Harold — a 106-year-old man who used to mesmerize me with his stories.

One day, as I was leaving, Harold said, "In case I'm not around anymore on your next visit, I want you to know something, Sister. My last relative died when I was 86 years old. That was the last time I had been hugged...until you. Twenty years is a long time to go without human touch. Whatever else you decide to do as a young nun, don't be afraid to let your caring show."

By my next visit, Harold had died. I never forgot his words.

Women are caring, nurturing people by our very beings. Let's use our gifts to lead others into the 21st century. Whether we are leading our country, our community, our church, our corporation, or our Networking organization, it will be through the development of our innate talents and our ability to give love that we rise to our full potential and begin to make a real difference in our world.

The French priest/paleontologist, Teilhard de Chardin might as well have been speaking to women when he wrote:

"The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire."

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